

## WOMAN OPPRESSION IN THE HANDMAID'S TALE TV SERIES SEASON 1: TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

In 2017, the adaptation of Margaret Atwood's 1985 published book, *The Handmaid's Tale* was brought up to online streaming service, Hulu. *The Handmaid's Tale* TV series tells us a story about Gilead, the dystopian country that is made in result of the decreasing fertility rates. Through the protagonist, a handmaid called Offred, Atwood offers the cruel reality of women's oppression that women face. This research focuses on the first two episodes of the TV series in season one, as the two episodes are introductory episodes. The utterances spoken by or targeted to Offred are used as the objects of this study. Stylistics approach is applied to provide the description of the story which then is combined with Halliday's transitivity, in order to reveal Offred's experience of being oppressed in Gilead. The oppression is seen from all five process types, relational, material, mental, behavioural, and existential. The findings found out that relational process type got the highest frequency, considering that Offred introduces her oppression and Gilead through this process type. It is also found that she used more free direct thought to narrate her story than to use free direct speech, as she opts to be silent but loud in her mind, the only place that she won't get jailed for saying things that is forbidden according Gilead's rules.

**Keywords:** *The Handmaid's Tale*, women, oppression, transitivity

### ABSTRAK

Pada tahun 2017, seri televisi adaptasi dari buku yang ditulis oleh Margaret Atwood berjudul *The Handmaid's Tale* ditayangkan di layanan peraliran daring, Hulu. Seri televisi *The Handmaid's Tale* bercerita tentang Gilead, negara distopia yang didirikan karena angka kelahiran yang menurun. Melalui pemain utama, seorang pelayan wanita bernama Offred, Atwood memberikan gambaran sesungguhnya tentang penindasan yang dihadapi para wanita. Riset ini berfokus pada dua episode pertama dari musim pertama yang juga episode pengenalan. Ucapan yang dilontarkan kepada Offred dan ucapan yang dilontarkan oleh Offred dipilih menjadi data riset. Pendekatan stilistika dipilih untuk memberikan deskripsi mengenai cerita yang kemudian digabungkan dengan teori transitivitas milik Halliday untuk melihat pengalaman Offred ditindas. Penindasan terlihat dari lima jenis proses transivity yaitu relational, material, mental, behavioural, dan existential. Hasil riset menunjukkan bahwa proses relational menjadi proses yang memiliki frekuensi paling besar dikarenakan Offred menceritakan penindasan yang ia rasakan dengan jenis proses ini. Hasil riset yang lain juga menunjukkan bahwa Offred memakai Free Direct Thought lebih sering untuk menceritakan pengalamannya dibandingkan dengan menggunakan Free Direct Speech, dikarenakan ia memilih untuk diam dan hanya berbicara di dalam pikirannya yang merupakan tempat yang aman dan tidak membuatnya dipenjara karena berbicara hal yang dilarang oleh peraturan Gilead.

**Kata Kunci:** *The Handmaid's Tale*, wanita, penindasan, transitivitas

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## INTRODUCTION

Oppression of woman is not a new phenomenon. Oppression of women is often linked with patriarchy. It is linked in the context that in male dominated society, women will be regarded as a creature to fulfill men needs. Thus, due to the dominant power that men have, women are placed in subordinate position. This dynamic is realized and justified in many social institutions, such as religious institution through church, families, or academies (Millett, 2000). Women has been vocal on oppression that it has been brought into literary works, such as novels and poetry. In recent years, those books started to be adapted to TV series, for instance, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

*The Handmaid's Tale* TV Series Season 1 was aired on Hulu in 2017. Until 2020, this TV series has three seasons and has won prestigious awards such as Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series in 2017. Based on an award winning book, *The Handmaid's Tale* that is written by Margaret Atwood that was published in 1985, Atwood implies the power and the right wing agenda of American's Christian Right during 1970s until 1980s (Neuman, 2006) to refuse the idea of women's equality. Atwood expresses the dominance of power in Gilead, a dystopian country formerly United States America, where a congressman named Fred Waterford and his wife, Serena Joy come up with newly-established social classes where men play a dominant role and control the society thus leads to the women's oppression.

The country embodies dictatorship and Bible teachings to be the foundation of ruling the country. The congressmen in Gilead believe that everything must be returned to the traditional value, to repay their doings as they have contaminated the earth with various so called sins, such as the use of birth control pills, the exploitation of natural resources, and the act of premarital sex. They also divide the duties according to the sex, commanders and drivers are men's jobs meanwhile domestic things such as cooking are done by women. Besides, Gilead has one important problem

which is the child scarce, as previously the fertility rate has dropped in the U.S. The congressman came up with the solution to gather all the fertile women in the country and make them *Handmaids* who will be the surrogate mothers for their children.

Thus, oppression toward women is the most prominent aspect that is discussed, as the handmaids are forced to be the solution of the child scarce that the country suffers. Using a version from The Old Testament, Genesis 30:1-3, "And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her, and she shall bear upon my kness, that I may also have children by her", the congressmen manipulate its people, making them believe that even God allows Gilead to have handmaids. In order to impregnate the handmaid, "The Ceremony Days" or the sexual intercourse activity is done with three people as the handmaid is placed between the bodies of the commander and the wife. However, the action done by the commander to the handmaid is considered as rape as the act is not consensual. The handmaid is forced to do that because of the religious, social, and evolutionary necessity (Arbaoui, 2018).

Other forms of oppression that is faced by the handmaids is seen from the various restriction that Gilead made for them. The red dress as the uniform to indicate that they are handmaids, the veil to restrain them for seeing random things, or a walking companion for each handmaid to avoid them wandering alone and could lead to act of escaping. Uniquely, every individuals of the social groups are also taking part of the act of suppressing due to this result. The Commanders hold the most power, manipulate and suppress the Wives, the Wives then suppress the Handmaids. The Eyes, or the guards, usually use violence to control Gilead's people.

Handmaids are gone through training first in The Rachel and Leah Center, or The Red Center, a place which the Aunts, selected older women who eventually brainwash and manipulate the future handmaids (Sadeghi & Mirzapour, 2020). The Aunts give the understanding to the handmaids that they are priceless, loved, valuable human being as God

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still allows them to have children through their wombs. This kind of understanding is internalized by the handmaids, thus slowly it silences them from voicing their oppression.

The research aims to find out the representation of oppression that Offred experienced. As handmaids are not valued as human, the representation could be found through the utterance made by Offred, or directly and indirectly targeted to Offred. As (Nguyen, 2012) once stated that harmless utterance could express the implied ideologies that is constructed between socially constructed object and what is produced linguistically. One of the types of utterance that will be discussed is free direct speech. Free direct speech means the utterance that is said by the character itself without reported clause (Leech & Short, 2007). The oppression could be also seen from the character's thoughts. In the TV series, the character's free direct thought is seen when the voice overs undertake the scenes. Offred is the only character that is having monologue. This may indicate that Offred's narrative is the most important part to tell the story (Harrison, 2020).

The clauses that represent oppression then is chosen as a data then are analyzed using the theory of transitivity from System Functional Linguistics. In transitivity, we explore the experience through the clauses based on the participant and type of process involved in an event. Transitivity helps us to understand how an action is executed, by whom and on why (Nguyen, 2012). In the correlation with literary work, transitivity patterns can be the medium for the readers to discover the certain worldview that is built by the ideology of the author (Fowler, 1986).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to support this research, the researcher gathers three journal articles which are related to this study. Two articles use transitivity to analyze the characters in literary works and the representation of social behavior that the characters experience

Another article discusses Offred's feminist consciousness in the novel version. These three journal articles are conducted by Darani (2014), Isti'anah (2019), and Arbaoui (2018).

A study titled *Persuasive and its realization through transitivity analysis: SFL perspective* conducted by Darani (2014) also contributes to my research as it explores about the representation of power through the characters in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Darani used SFL and stylistics approach and focuses on the transitivity theory. In this research, Darani found that the representation of power is seen mostly from the material processes, as the proportion of data is 49.10%. Darani concluded that power is represented through the characters of the animals as they appear the most as the doer of the action. The high frequency of material processes in the story shows that power is represented through the actions that are done involuntary by the characters (Darani, 2014).

The second study is conducted by Isti'anah (2019). Isti'anah explored the representation of Afghan women in a study titled *Transitivity Analysis of Afghan Women in Åsne Seierstad's The Bookseller* in 2019. In this research, Isti'anah examined the characterization of Afghan women through three characters; mother (Bibi Gul), first wife (Sharifa), and daughter (Leila). After analyzing, it was revealed that material processes are most frequent process that is used to describe the female characters. They are submissive and devoted as they still would do what are the society told to, therefore they are narrated as Actors (Isti'anah, 2019). Isti'anah also used SFL and stylistics as the approach.

The last reviewed study is by Arbaoui (2018). This research discussed Offred's feminist consciousness in *The Handmaid's Tale* in a study titled *Feminist Dystopian Consciousness in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale*. This research explored how Offred uses her consciousness to be a storyteller of her own tale. Despite the pressure to be obedient, Offred tries to be present and observe her surrounding to get what she wants which is freedom (Arbaoui,

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2018). This study also reveals Atwood's effort to warn people of the possibility of a place without freedom such as Gilead. Overall, this study gives insights on Offred's experiences.

Due to the lack of the discussion of *The Handmaid's Tale* through linguistic theory, this research focuses on the linguistic perspective through stylistic approach and the theory of transitivity to reveal the oppression that is felt by the main character which is a woman and a handmaid named Offred. Therefore, this study aims to answer two objectives; the first is to figure out the transitivity patterns in the utterances targeted to or spoken by Offred in the form of free direct speech and free direct thoughts and second is to reveal the women's oppression that Offred experiences.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach that is applied in this research is stylistics. Stylistics is a study of particular expression and its explanation of the purpose and consequences in language (Verdonk, 2003). In order to understand the application of stylistic analysis, the first thing that must be understood is that language has many layers. These layers then are categorized under the term of levels of language (Simpson, 2004). The levels consists of phonology, graphology, morphology, syntax, lexical analysis, semantics, and pragmatics. In this research, the study that is conducted is in syntax level as it deals with the forms of phrases and sentences.

In conducting this research, the method that is applied is qualitative method. Qualitative research aims to describe life worlds from the people who participate in it (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). In qualitative research, it tries to present an answer of a problem with extensive explanation from a theory. In short, the researcher would start to answer the research question by explaining the basic concept of the theories, then analyzing the data with the theories.

The object that is used in the research is clauses from the free direct thoughts and free direct speech from the main character named Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* TV Series Season 1 especially on first and second episode. In order to collect the data, the researcher took these steps. The first step, the researcher watched all the episodes in the first season. After that, the first and the second episodes were chosen as the episodes to be analyzed. The next step was to find the free direct speeches targeted to or spoken by Offred and free direct thoughts spoken by Offred that represent the oppression. The last step was to break the complex sentences into dependent and independent clauses. The clauses are analyzed using the transitivity from Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to find out the inner and outer experience that Offred experienced. After the clauses are analyzed with transitivity, the context of the scenes regarding women's oppression is explained.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The Effect of Offred's Free Direct Thoughts and Speeches

To understand Offred's experience of being oppressed, the first step is to list Offred's utterances which are divided into free direct speech and free direct thought. Free direct thought in the form of voice over narration is used by Offred to voice out her desperation as she is used to be silenced by torturous training by the Aunts (Fienberg, 2017) while free direct speech is used when Offred is asked to say something or have conversation with someone. Free direct speeches here are utterances that are targeted to or spoken by Offred.

The frequency of free direct thought and free direct speech are different, 44 clauses are categorized as free direct thoughts and the rest 34 clauses as free direct speech. This difference is caused by the suppression of voices in Gilead, forcing the handmaids to be submissive and accept whatever they are told

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to. Thus, Offred is seen using free direct thought more than free direct speech.

### Transitivity in Offred's Utterance

In Systematic Functional Linguistics, it is known that there are three metafunctions namely textual, interpersonal, and ideational metafunction. In textual metafunction, the clause serves as a message while in interpersonal metafunction, the clause serves as an exchange. In the last metafunction, ideational, the clause serves as representation. In this metafunction, there is a system that is called transitivity which functions as a tool to reveal the speaker's experiences. Thus, transitivity is suitable for this study as the researcher explores Offred's experiences.

As Halliday & Matthiessen (2014a) state that there are six processes in transitivity system which are material, mental, relational, behavioural, existential, and verbal process. The material process serves to explain about the happening of an event in our external world. In other hand, there is process which concerns with our experiences in internal world or our consciousness, called mental process. In between these two processes, there is a process called behavioural which explains the physiological and psychological behaviour.

When we want to to characterize and identify something, the process which is used is called relational process. The other process. verbal process, contains the verbs related with the expression of saying. The last type, existential process, shows us that something exists or happens.

Thus, the second step in order to reveal the oppression is to analyze the utterances into the transitivity process type. Theories are applied here from both linguistics and literature fields to support the analysis. The context in the TV Series would be narrated also after the explanation of the theory thus it can be understood more. The table that is presented below is the summary of the findings of the transitivity patterns from Offred's utterance both free direct speech and free direct thoughts in the first and second episode. The transitivity types are ranked from the highest to the lowest frequency.

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage of process types

| Transitivity<br>Process Type | Clause    |            |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
|                              | Frequency | Percentage |
| <b>Relational</b>            | 36        | 46 %       |
| <b>Material</b>              | 29        | 37%        |
| <b>Mental</b>                | 9         | 12%        |
| <b>Existential</b>           | 3         | 4%         |
| <b>Behavioural</b>           | 1         | 1%         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 78        | 100%       |

### Relational Process Showing Oppression

Based on Table 1, the highest frequency is seen in relational process. Although the number of material and relational process is slightly different, only five clauses, however the oppression is still clear. Relational clause functions to identify and to characterize between the participants (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014a). In this case, relational clause is used to describe the phenomena or the setting in the Gilead. Relational process type serve descriptive information regarding the presence of the phenomena and the character of the participants involved in the process (Darani, 2014).

As it is mentioned above, Gilead restrains its people especially women to do many things that are used to be a normal in the time before Gilead. As the first episode is the introductory episode, Offred seems using a lot of free direct thought in the form of voice over narration due to her restriction to voice out her opinion. She tries to explain her surrounding using relational clause. To understand the concept more, notice the three clauses below given the situation of Offred explaining about her given identity and things that is restricted in Gilead.

The first type is relational identifying clause. This occurs when one participant is identified by the other participant. Further explanation is discussed with the clause below.

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**Table 2.** Example of Relational Identifying Clause

| Code          | Type    | Clause  |  |        |
|---------------|---------|---------|--|--------|
| HMT/<br>E1/06 | Direct  | My name | is                                     | Offred |
|               | thought | Token   | Process:<br>Relational;<br>Identifying | Value  |

The participant *My name* is identified by the participant *Offred*. In simple words, the word *Offred* gives the identity to the participant *My name*. From this clause, Offred to explain that her name is now Offred and no longer *June Osborne*. In addition to her new identity, she is trying to tell that she is now Offred and she is going to narrate her story to the audience that she is trapped and oppressed in Gilead.

This narrative is shown through free direct thought in the form of voice over. She expresses her resistance through her tale which is critical and shows perspective of her little world (Howell, 2019). Also through *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood tries to express the oppression toward women by means of political and religious trends, women's reaction to such victimization, their loss of identity, and their effort to find their lost female and national identity (Sadeghi & Mirzapour, 2020).

**Table 3.** Example of Relational Possessive Clause

| Code          | Type    | Clause  |                                       |              |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| HMT/<br>E1/07 | Direct  | I       | had                                   | another name |
|               | thought | Carrier | Process:<br>Relational;<br>Possession | Attribute    |

The second type is relational possessive clause. It can be seen that the clause has the relational attributive possessive process type with the verb "had" which indicates possession. Thus, the participant *I* serves as *Carrier* or *Possessor* and the

participant *another name* serves as attribute to *I*. In the other words, the participant *another name* also serves as possessed entity to the possessor *I*.

This clause describes the condition that Offred has no longer her real identity as June Osborne because all the handmaids in Gilead cannot have their original name. Their names must be replaced with the prefix *-Of* and followed with the name of their commanders. The combination of the prefix – *Of* with the commander's name also indicates the handmaid's function merely as a slave (Arbaoui, 2018).

The third example is relational intensive clause. In this clause, the participant *So many things* that is called carrier, is related with another participant or the attribute *forbidden*. The relational attributive intensive serve to explain that the participant belongs to a class.

**Table 4.** Example of Relational Intensive Clause

| Code           | Type           | Clause      |   |           |                                  |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|---|-----------|----------------------------------|
| HMT/<br>EP1/09 | Free           | So          | are   | forbidden | now                              |
|                | Direct thought | many things |   |           |                                  |
|                |                | Carrier     | Process:<br>Relational;<br>Intensive<br>Attributive | Attribute | Cir-<br>cum-<br>stance<br>: Time |

This means that the carrier *So many things* belongs to the class of actions that are forbidden by Gilead's government. The oppression is seen again in this clause, as it describes the things that people especially women can't do in Gilead such as reading, writing, wearing with their own clothes, walking outside without companion, having friends, even having romantic relationship with other person.

### Material Process Showing Oppression

The second category that has the highest frequency is the material process. This process express someone's outer experience.

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Material process consists of a participant who is doing the action or an *Actor*. The participant whom the action is directed to is called *Goal*. Besides *Goal*, the other participant found in this finding is *Scope*.

**Table 5.** Example of Material and Scope Clause

| Code          | Type           | Clause  |
|---------------|----------------|---|
| HMT/<br>EP1/3 | Free<br>direct | I try not to think about those escapes.   |
| HMT/<br>EP1/4 | thought        | It is harder on ceremony days,  |
| HMT/<br>EP1/5 |                | <div> <div>but</div> <div>thinking</div> <div>can hurt</div> <div>your chances</div> </div> <div> <div>Actor</div> <div>Process: Material</div> <div>Scope</div> </div> |

This clause is considered as material process type as *hurt* is a verb and the modal verb *can* gives the possibility of getting the action. The *Actor* here apparently is the word *thinking*. Offred's act to think actually hurt the chance of getting away from Gilead because Offred knows she cannot get away from the place. The affected thing by the action *can hurt* is *your chance* which is categorized as *Scope*. Scope in material clause means that the participant is not affected by the action. Here, the participant *your chance* is not affected at all by the verb.

The oppression is transparent enough if we see from the clause *thinking can hurt your chance*. Women in Gilead are not able to do anything, let alone to escape. The independent clause *It is harder on ceremony days* gives us the glimpse of how Offred's life as a handmaid is very hard as they have to give their best performance on The Ceremony Day. As Offred knows that escaping is impossible, such action as thinking about the escape can weigh your burden as handmaid. Handmaids are merely seen as a "two legged wombs" because of their function. All of their freedom as a human is taken away and is exchanged for the country's need; the children.

**Table 6.** Example of Material and Goal Clause

| Code           | Type                      | Clause  |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|
| HMT/<br>EP1/10 | Free<br>direct<br>thought | <div> <div>Rita</div> <div>Actor</div> <div>Process: Material</div> <div>Goal</div> <div>Circumstance: Means</div> </div> |

The second example of material clauses is seen from Offred's description of Rita. It is clear that the *Actor* here is Rita as she is the doer of the action of making the bread. The participant *the bread* serves as the *Goal* as it is the thing that is affected by the action. Although Rita here acts as the actor, however she is still oppressed because she is forced to do the cooking chores. Another part in this clause is circumstances as in *from scratch*. Circumstances gives the additional information to the clause regarding time, place, reason, and so on. In this clause, from stractch is considered circumstance means category as it gives the information how the bread is made of. Rita here is a Martha, another class besides handmaids that is fully occupied in kitchen. Unlike hanmaids whose jobs only to bear children, Martha only does cooking for the whole household (Arbaoui, 2018).

This clause is followed by clauses explaining about Martha's job, narrated by Offred, "It is the kind of thing they like the Marthas to do. It is what they fought for. A return to traditional values." Gilead's attempt to set the country with religious values is implemented in the division of traditional roles for men and women. Men are placed either at office like Commanders, or in the streets like The Eyes, Guards, or in the driver seats like Drivers. Women, in the other hands, are expected to do what women usually do, such as cooking for Marthas, bearing children for Handmaids, teaching the handmaids for Aunts, and taking care of children for the Wives. If the house has not been blessed with a child, the wives usually do things they like under

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control of Gilead's rules, for example knitting and gardening.

Another clause containing material process occurs in this clause. Offred narrates

this as the answer to Rita who is saying that Ofglen waits for her outside.

**Table 7.** Example of Material Goal Clause

| Code           | Type                      | Clause |       |                      |           |                                 |                       |                        |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| HMT/<br>EP1/15 | Free<br>direct<br>thought | that   | I     | have                 | barely 50 | with her                        | in the two            | since I got            |
|                |                           |        |       | exchanged            | words     |                                 | months                | here                   |
|                |                           |        | Actor | Process:<br>Material | Goal      | Circumstances;<br>accompaniment | Circumstance;<br>time | Circumstance;<br>place |

Offred serves as the actor, narrating her story about she is not even exchanging 50 words with Ofglen. There are three different circumstances found in the clause, accompaniment, time and place. These three circumstances give additional information regarding Offred and Ofglen. The circumstance accompaniment explains that Ofglen is the one that Offred barely talk to, even though they are walking companion. In addition to that, the circumstances time and place, for example, express the information of duration of Offred coming to Commander Fred's house.

Although Ofglen is her walking companion to the market, as Gilead expects women to be submissive and obedient, the women are trained to be silent in whatever condition. This also applies when handmaids are together because they do not want to get in trouble for voicing their voices. Gilead has become a place everyone's freedom is restricted, even to talk about your opinion, especially for women. Therefore, the participant *I* in this clause is significant as Offred voices that she does not exchange words with Ofglen because of the restriction.

### Mental Process Showing Oppression

The third process type which dominates the findings is mental process. Mental process concerns with our experiences in our own consciousness (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014b). In simple words, the

changes of event happens in our own consciousness. In mental clauses, the participants are named *Senser*, usually a human who senses, and *Phenomenon*, a thing that is thought, wanted, perceived, or wanted. Mental clauses occurred in nine clauses, for example in this clause that is narrated by Offred who is doing a grocery shopping in the market.

**Table 8.** Example of Mental Clause

| Code           | Type              | Clause |                    |                        |
|----------------|-------------------|--------|--------------------|------------------------|
| HMT/<br>EP1/27 | Free              | I      | need               | to grab the            |
|                | Direct<br>thought |        |                    | nearest<br>machine gun |
|                |                   | Senser | Process:<br>Mental | Phenomenon             |

The main verb in this clause is *need*. Offred here as a *Senser* has the desire of picking up the *Phenomenon*, *the nearest machine gun* which is carried by the guard in the market. Offred as the *Senser* or the participant here is important thing to be noticed as she is the one who feels the oppression.

To put it in the context, Gilead has guards who always carrying guns, especially in public spaces such as markets, parks, pedestrian streets. It is used to scare the people

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who do not follow their rules. It gives the illusion that the guards has the authority to hurt the people and no one can fight over these people in Gilead expect men in higher position.

After being put into an endless suffering for not being able to do many things by herself while at the same time is expected to be submissive, she expresses this utterance in her mind therefore it employs the free direct thought. Also her position as Senser that has the desire to grab the nearest machine gun is an important aspect as the viewer can see feel her oppression.

As Offred is an obedient handmaid who has been silenced by Gilead, she

expresses this desire in free direct thoughts in the form of voice over narration. She only keeps her desire her mind and not actually doing it because in Gilead, you have two choices. You can be silent and be safe, or you can be vocal and you die. She wants to grab the nearest machine gun due to her exhaustion of being silenced in Gilead. She wants to rebel, wants to kill the guards, and escape, but she knows it is impossible.

The next example is situated after Ofglen and Offred are done doing grocery shopping and in their way to their home. Ofglen and Offred stop for a bit in front of a shop, and starts reminiscing the past.

**Table 9.** Example of Mental Clause

| Code                   | Type               | Clause |                        |                    |                               |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>HMT/<br/>EP1/51</b> | Free direct speech | I      | always                 | thought            | you were such a true believer |
|                        |                    | Senser | Circumstances:<br>Time | Process:<br>Mental | Phenomenon                    |

In this clause, the Senser here is Offred. She does the action of thinking therefore it is considered as mental clause. Offred here as the Senser feels The circumstance of time, *always*, here emphasizes that she always thinks and believe that Ofglen is such a true believer of God and the values that are taught in Gilead. This is the first time Offred and Ofglen are seen in a intimate conversation, yet they have to do it in hushed voices so that The Eyes did not catch them for talking to each other.

Offred as the Senser here also tells us how she thinks about Ofglen being such a true believer. Offred feels that she is the only one that does not believe in God, and believe that everyone is such a believer. After talking to Ofglen, she now knows that she is not the only one that feels oppressed in Gilead. These two mental clauses can describe us the oppression which happening to the handmaids in Gilead. They are forced to be silent, having nowhere

to escape, and they are left with their own minds to become their only friends because it is the safest place they can be. They would not be jailed and blamed in their minds. They are liberated only when they are talking in their minds as no one can hear what they are thinking.

### Existential Process Showing Oppression

The fourth process type is existensial process. This process gives the information that something exists or happens (Halliday & Matthiessen). If we have Senser for the participant who senses in mental process, there is not any participant who senses or who is doing the action. Existential only explains that an event happens or an entity exists. In addition to that, existential process typically has *be* as the verb. In the findings, the researcher has found three clauses consisting this process type.

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**Table 10.** Example of Existential Clause

| Code           | Type                      | Clause   |     |               |      |
|----------------|---------------------------|--|-----|---------------|------|
| HMT/<br>EP1/22 | Free<br>Direct<br>thought | There  | are | no<br>friends | here |
|                |                           | Process: Existential<br>Entity: Existential<br>Circumstance: Place |     |               |      |

As mentioned above, the participant *There* is not labelled neither as a participant or circumstance. *There* only indicates the existence. Existential is a phenomenon which can be a thing, person, object, institution, abstraction, action or event. *Friends* is categorized as persons therefore it is considered as entity.

In Gilead, as Offred has said, there are no friends. Although every handmaid is given a walking companion who is also a handmaid, however, they only act as merely companions

and not friends. They don't chat about their personal lives, they don't exchange information about personal values, they only meet in front of their front doors, then shop together and walk together. If eventually they become friends, it does not last long because if a handmaid is successful bringing a child to the world, they will get posted to another place which means your shopping partner will be different.

In other words, Gilead does not accommodate its people to be free for choosing their own choices in lives. Women are also divided into many classes, making them distrust each other. Everyone becomes individual, selfish, and inconsiderate to each other because the condition in Gilead forces them to be that kind of person. Handmaids, especially, only live for the sake of the children, thus they do not bother to have platonic relationship such as have friends.

**Table 11.** Example of Existential Clause

| Code           | Type                     | Clause  |    |        |               |
|----------------|--------------------------|---|----|--------|---------------|
| HMT/<br>EP1/55 | Free<br>Direct<br>speech | There   | is | an Eye | in your house |
|                |                          | Process: Existential<br>Entity: Existential<br>Circumstances: Place |    |        |               |

Another example is presented below. The same pattern occurred in this clause. In this free direct speech uttered by Ofglen to Offred, it is explained that An Eye is there in Offred's house. An Eye is men who acts like secret agents. They keep tabs on everyone, especially on Marthas and Handmaids.

As this free direct speech is spoken by Ofglen to Offred, Ofglen reminds Offred to be careful, as Nick, the driver in Offred's house is one of the people associated to The Eyes. The existent of Nick is dangerous for Offred as he secretly watches Offred's movement in the

house. The Eyes are often harsh and using violence to everyone who is potential to do revolutionary act or to people who do not follow Gilead's rules. Therefore, even Offred is powerless towards her life in her posting house, as she is watched by Commander and his wife, the Martha, and the Eye to ensure that she does not do anything dangerous such as escaping from the house as she is needed in the house to bear the children.

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### Behavioural Process Showing Oppression

All the process types discussed above are determined by either looking at our inner or outer experiences. There is only type that explains the process between human's physiological and psychological behavior which is called Behavioral process type. The verb that is usually occurred in this process is look, laugh, smile, talk, watch, cough, sing, and so on. There is only one clause that express the oppression felt by Offred. The clause is written below.

**Table 12.** Example of Behavioural Clause

| Code           | Type                      | Clause  |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|
| HMT/<br>EP1/18 | Free<br>direct<br>thought | Maybe he watches me<br>behavior behavioural behaviour |

In this clause, the verb *watches* is considered behavioural process type. The participants in behavioural process type consist of Behavior, the person who is behaving and Behaviour or participant that is not affected by the action. In this clause, the Behavior is *he* or Nick, one of the members of the Eyes. The behavior here apparently is not Offred and it gives another perspective of the oppression that is happening in Gilead. Nick is one of the members of The Eyes, guards who oversee the people in Gilead and use violence to discipline them. Therefore, Nick as behavior is watching every movement of Offred so she is not entirely free of her own life in the house. However, the one who narrates this utterance is Offred to explain that Nick maybe watches her for whatever movement she makes in this house.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### Conclusion

As oppression is still experienced by women throughout the world, The Handmaid's Tale TV Series gives them a safe place for women to be recognized, while also to warn people that Gilead can be a place where we

live in the future. The oppression toward women in The Handmaid's Tale is prominent that can be seen from the 78 clauses that are listed as the data. By using transitivity, it is found that relational process type occur the most than the rest of the process types. This due to her effort to narrate her story, to characterize and to identify herself and her surrounding in Gilead's oppressed environment.

The participant I refers to Offred is also seen in many clauses, making the oppression is prominent felt by Offred. The other participant such as Nick in the behavioural process also gives another perspective that other individual is suppressing the handmaid. Rita, or the Martha in the house is also capable of doing the cooking but instead she is forced by the religious value that is believed by Gilead. Other than that, free direct thoughts are also used more than free direct speech because the expectation that handmaid should be submissive and obedient, thus Offred is found to speak about her opinion more in her mind in the form of voice over narration.

#### Suggestions

The researcher suggests further research on The Handmaid's Tale TV Series that focuses on linguistic aspects. As The Handmaid's Tale more often explored through literature point of view, revealing the oppression can be also from linguistics. Explaining the scenes with photos from the series could help for the next research.

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